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Internationalization Strategy: How can Nova School of Business and Economics attract Canadian students?

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Abstract

Internationalization is becoming an essential factor for today's society, determinant for the development not only for individuals but also for Higher Education Institutions.

This dissertation aims to advise Nova SBE on how to attract Canadian students. It will also help to understand the current trends and students' behaviors on studying abroad and based on that provide different. For this to become possible, it was developed a qualitative research in order to understand the main insights on what makes Canadian students to study abroad. The biggest obstacle for students studying abroad is the lack of financial funds, which makes scholarships a requirement for students to consider this possibility. In what concerns the study of Nova SBE, it was mentioned that there is a lack of attention and care by the faculty staff in order to help the students integrate in the university and the city.

Keywords: Internationalization strategy, Higher Education System, Canadian Higher Education Market

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Introduction

The purpose of this thesis dissertation is to recommend an internationalization strategy designed to enable Nova SBE to attract more Canadian students to its programs. It will explain the methodology used to understand the students' main reasons to study abroad and motivations to choose the country or school at stake. Moreover, a situation analysis of Nova SBE will be presented, explaining its position regarding internationalization, the strategies it has been following and the reasons why the school wants to target Canadian students.

Due to the fact that Canada has high income per capita and education levels they are a good target for Nova SBE as they will increase the universities' income and at least maintain its education quality. This topic will be analyzed in more depth in the Nova SBE analysis chapter. After that comes an analysis that will cover an overview of Canada Higher Education (HE) and its internationalization strategies, as well as students' motivations and main challenges to study abroad. As a conclusion, after a careful analysis of all the data collected, several recommendations on the application of the strategy will be detailed.

Methodology

This project aims at developing an internationalization strategy for Nova SBE to enter the Canadian Market by studying the reasons that lead Canadian students to study abroad, by getting an insight on what criteria is used in their decision-making process (e.g. country, university).

A situation analysis of Nova SBE will be provided, including the general internationalization strategies used to attract new students to the school. The Organizational Resource Platform (ORP) model will be applied with the aim of providing a careful examination of the school's position in the market and understand if this position can reflect or not a competitive advantage. The usage of this model here is justified by the high importance for an organization to pursue its strategy and identify its resources/productive assets – financial, human, physical,

technological and reputation (Grant, 2010). Among these, one can identify, employees' know-how, plant equipment, patents and copyrights. It is important then to focus on merging the resources and the capability of the school, meaning the productive assets and what Nova SBE can do with them, creating an organizational capability. This capability is the essence of the competitive advantage (Grant, 2010). The ORP will also identify the relationship between productive assets and capabilities for Nova SBE, to find out where lies the essence of its competitive advantage. After understanding Nova SBE's resources and capabilities, a SWOT analysis will be provided, in order to compare both universities' current internal strengths and weaknesses, (where the physical facilities, the quality of the faculty, the programs offered by the school and the location can be taken into account but can go also beyond that (Mark, 2011)), with the opportunities and threats that emerge from an analysis of the external environment (Zechlin, 2010).

It is relevant to also look at the current Canadian Higher Education Market. For this a deep research was made, based on primary, secondary and tertiary data (e.g. journal articles, books, databases, reports, websites). After that, a PEST analysis follows. It is used to understand what external factors are affecting the organization, what factors may suffer modifications in the future and what sort of social and cultural characteristics of the target population have to take into account when building the strategy. Put all together, the method helps to evaluate the potential of the new market, (Rugman & Collison, 2006).

A SWOT analysis of both the Canadian market comes next. It is characterized by its flexibility, since it emphasizes the quality of an organization without necessarily having extensive marketing information systems. It further allows to synthesize and integrate the varied information, organizing and transforming the weakness of the diversified data into major strengths of the strategic planning (Ferrel & Hartline, 2011). It is used to identify expansion opportunities or defend against the threats better than competitors (in this case, other Business

and Economics Schools). The results of this project will be based on a Qualitative research and an Inductive approach. Eight interviews were conducted to Canadian students that attend Nova SBE. The purpose of these interviews were to understand what were the reasons that made Canadian to come to study to Portugal, what were their priorities when deciding to study abroad and what challenges they face in their adaptation process in Portugal and Nova SBE. Their knowledge and experience was used as an input for the recommendations of this thesis. The duration of the interviews was 30 minutes each. They were firstly recorded and then transcript. The objective of a qualitative research is to acquire an understanding of people's motivation, attitudes, preferences and behaviors. It is used to gain a qualitative understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations for a given decision. (Kitchen & Proctor, 2001). Hence, the reason why it's important to do a qualitative research in this project is because it provides a more in-depth knowledge and a greater richness of the context, which will allow to have a clear perspective, since in qualitative researches the sample is a small number of non-representative cases (Kitchen & Proctor, 2001). Moreover, this method allows face-to-face contact, increasing the willingness and motivation of people to participate in the research (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

An inductive approach involves the '*development of a theory as a result of an observation of empirical data.*' It also allows for a full understanding of the research context, emphasizing the collection of qualitative data. (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009). Nova SBE does not know a lot about the Canadian Market, therefore an exploratory research was necessary.

Internationalization of Higher Education

One of the most important key trends of Education as a whole is internationalization of its HE component. According to a revised definition of Jane Knight, by the *Directorate-General for Internal Policies*, internationalization is '*the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary*

education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society.’. There are many approaches that can be followed in order to achieve competitiveness and performance in HE and international academic mobility, such as student’s exchange programs or strategic partnerships (Borza & Crisan-Mitra, 2015). Moreover, there are several reasons why internationalization is important for the development of higher education: it can be seen purely as an economic gain, since foreign incoming students are one the main sources of short and long term income in different countries, (Ardakani, Yarmohammadian, Abari, & Fathi, 2011); it enriches university’s learning environment and is seen as a way to attract more students, at an international and domestic level, (Lin, Yang, & Ho, 2015); internationalization can also be a contribute by enhancing the school’s reputation (through rankings) and visibility and eventually increase competitiveness (Hans, Hunter, Egron-Polak, & Howard, 2015); it combines both intercultural and international dimensions that affects research, curricula and the teaching process of the school, (Borza & Crisan-Mitra, 2015); it is a major tool in what concerns developing student’s global perspective and values, develop international competencies and increase employability and access to job opportunities in the international marketplace (AUCC Internationalization Survey, 2014).

In order to implement a successful internationalization strategy, it is important to take into consideration what internationalization approach the school should follow and which one will provide a positive outcome. One can follow a co-operative approach that includes mostly academic networking, strategic co-operation agreements and institutional strategic partnerships. These partnerships allow a rapid entry in foreign markets, enabling both parties to access assets owned by the other, learn new approaches and educational innovations. The Co-operative approach is mainly based on “academic and cultural rationales.”

Another approach that can be used in order to implement the strategy of internationalization is the competitive approach. This approach aims at implementing more flexible ways of studying abroad, a constant pursuit of niche markets in developing countries, use of an aggressive marketing and advertisement, for instance by leveraging a school's superior reputation in other countries as well as diminish the price of education and engagement of foreign recruitment agents.

One can also opt by co-opetition approach, which involves collaboration and competition at the same time, in this case by Business and Economics Schools. This approach requires an equilibrium between a conflict of interest, mutual trust and commitment of partners.

In order to have a successful strategy implementation it is important that the university's stakeholders, namely professors and other faculty staff, is integrated and aligned with the internationalization strategy. (Bennett & Kottasz, 2011)

Regarding the main trends linked to Internationalization of HE, one can identify the following as relevant: increase of the students' will to physically move abroad to study by means of shared programs between institutions; "stronger focus on internationalization at home, both through the curriculum and through global citizenship", "virtual mobility and collaborative online international learning as tools for international experience at home". It is becoming to appear an increase on global convergence, if not in actions at least on aspirations, (Hans, Hunter, Egron-Polak, & Howard, 2015).

Nova School of Business and Economics (Nova SBE)

Since the introduction of the Bologna Program in 2005 in Portugal and the restructuring of the European Higher Education, Nova SBE decided to reinforce the preparation of its students for the changes ahead in the labor market. The new European HE market landscape is currently being formed and only the business schools that maintain a strong international outlook and scope will reach the top, (Traça, 2013).

With Bologna becoming effective, Nova SBE changed all of its programs. In the undergraduate programs it started to offer all the necessary basic, more theoretical training, requiring at the same time students to build and develop their own critical thinking. In the Masters degrees a very practical approach was taken and chosen as a curriculum and assuming students to semi-professionals that is, treating them not as a continuity of their academic path but rather as a transition stage to their professional lives. (Traça, 2013)

Nova SBE offers the degrees of Economics and Business Management, for undergraduates. The Master's Programs are divided in Management, Finance, and Economics. In addition, the School offers 2 joint degrees, the CEMS MIM and the International Master in Finance Brazil-Europe and 7 double degrees.

Financial Times ranks Nova School of Business and Economics among the top 30 business schools in Europe. Moreover, about 40% of MSc students start international careers upon graduation. Attracting more Canadian students will most likely increase this figure.

From 2015 onward, students can already start their BSc in English (the 1st year of the BSc was the only year at Nova SBE solely taught in Portuguese). This allows the recruitment of more international bachelor students. In fact, the adoption of the English language in teaching has been one of the basic pillars of Nova's internationalization for over 20 years.

In order to promote the school abroad, Nova SBE uses international fairs, relies on WOM (word of mouth) among the students, e-mail marketing and promotion in dedicated website.

In 2014-2015, the applications for Masters' degree (cohort of 2015) increased 35%, 52% of that coming from international students. Students from Germany, Italy, France, China, India, and Brazil reached 43% of applications to the Nova Masters programs. In the particular case of Canada, in 2014, 4 Canadian students were enrolled in Nova SBE to take a Master degree. In 2015, 6 Canadians were taking a Master Degree, where 4 of them were in CEMS MIM and the other 2 were taking a Double Degree. This means that, step by step, Nova SBE is beginning to

rise its interest to enter in the Canadian market and attract new students. Moreover, it has exchange agreements with 150 institutions in 50 countries all over the world. Nova SBE has a worldwide community of over 12,000 alumni.

To continue expanding its reach, Nova SBE is investing in new markets in order to gain more reputation and visibility abroad. There are several reasons that lead Nova SBE to want to attract Canadian students. Canada has a developed education system, with virtually every student taking a university degree. By attracting such valuable students with such a specific mindset and skills as the Canadians have, Nova SBE will manage to increase its absolute international exposure and diversify its student population.

The existence of several Portuguese communities spread out in Canada makes it a logical target, since they already have a special connection to Portugal facilitates the recruitment process of students.

Canada

Brief Overview of Higher Education

Canada has 10 provinces and 3 territories. Each of these regions is responsible for the overall education management. The structure of the schools varies from one province to another, which might raise an issue for Canada as a country to articulate what the schools sector can provide international students, (Education New Zealand, 2011).

Canada's education system is divided in four main levels: Secondary, Bachelors, Masters and Doctorate, as shown in Appendix 1. It can be also split into the Quebec route and the rest of Canada route to higher education. In Quebec there's still one stage after secondary school that students take before university. They attend a general and professional education college (CEGEP¹). It can either take 2 years, if the students plan to go to university or 3 years if they want to complete a vocational diploma, (Kelly, 2015).

¹ Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel

One of Canada's major highlights is the good reputation of its education and research strength and influence, especially within borders. On the other hand, Canada's low profile of its education system is still an issue, being behind Western Europe and United States, (McBride, Humphries, & Knight-Grofe, 2015).

Internationalization in Canada

Student mobility, external or internal, is one of the most discussed topics under internationalization in University education worldwide. UK (68%), Australia (65%), France (59%), Germany (32%) and USA (32%) are the mostly preferred countries by students to study in and all of them are either English speaking or a big Western European country. Furthermore, business/management and economics are the fields with highest level of relation to internationalization, (AUCC Internationalization Survey, 2014). Canada is an exception to this, where only 3.1% of full-time undergraduate students, or about 25,000 students, had the possibility to engage in an experience abroad during 2012-2013 academic year. In that period, 2.6% of full-time undergraduate students joined a for-credit international experience, increasing 0.4% compared to 2006, (AUCC Internationalization Survey, 2014).

Another important aspect to take into consideration is the strategies used by Canadian institutions in order to increase its number of students abroad. In order to do this, they are striving to expand and diversify the quantity of programs and partnerships with several foreign Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). 86% of these institutions, prioritize countries like China (offering mainly double degree programs with 19 undergraduate, 12 master's and four doctoral degree programs), France (offering a double degree program with four undergraduate, 11 master's and 6 PhD), Brazil and Germany, (AUCC Internationalization Survey, 2014).

Students' motivators and main challenges for studying abroad

According to the "*World of Learning: Canadian Post-Secondary Students and the Study Abroad Experience*", there are two main aspects that Canadian students take into consideration when studying abroad: personal and academic. For those who haven't lived in a cultural context

outside their home country value factors such as travel and enjoying the lifestyle of the country. Those who already had a foreign experience are drawn to value learning to live in a different culture and global awareness. Another important factor that students take into consideration are the career benefits that they will have after having a foreign experience, since studying abroad is a great opportunity to learn a foreign language, which can be a valuable asset when applying for a job. There is also external motivations that normally come from friends, family and faculty champions². Most students who already had participated in study abroad are most likely to participate again.

When considering the barriers that prevent Canadian students to study abroad, one must take into account three main aspects that are crucial in students' decision. The first concerns not only the lack of financial support³ but also the lack of recognition regarding the cost of studying abroad as a valid expense by the Student Loans Program. The second one concerns the lack of readiness and willingness from Canadian students to face the challenges that come with cultural differences as well as the personal and academic experience the foreign country would offer them. Since the quality of life in Canada is very high, they do not see major advantages in leaving their country. This lack of readiness from students can be explained by some insufficient awareness or explanation of the benefits of having an educational experience abroad. Moreover, parents of students play an important role regarding the decision of studying abroad. Those parents who already experienced an exchange program before (say, in an elder child) are much more willing to let some other child go.

The last one concerns institutional barriers, where there is a lack of incentive by the faculties and its academic programs in encouraging students to embrace an exchange program. In other words, there are many faculties where internationalization is not a priority and that have lack

² Member of the university which is an advisor to the student

³ (Present in all provinces except for Quebec that created an international exchange program)

of global vision. Even if efforts are made in order to promote this practice, they are still not sufficient to assure an increase in the number of attendants in exchange programs.

PEST Analysis

Political	Economic	Social	Technological
Provincial funding transfers to universities and colleges have significantly declined in real (inflation-adjusted) per-student: provincial governments are free to do as they wish with the funding they receive	Number of young people from families with low income who enroll HE and obtain a degree have increase Employment rate is relatively high: 61,3%	Parents with experience of higher education have higher levels of educational aspirations for their children and view education and school careers as extremely important. Preference for the areas of business, management and public administration Gender inequalities- women students outnumber men: more women graduate from every field of study except mathematics, computer and information science, and architecture,	Higher education contributes substantially to R&D research (accounted for C\$11.5 billion (\$10.9 billion) worth of investments Distance Education, adopted by universities and colleges has been developed to serve students in many parts of Canada

Sources: (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, 2012); (MarketLine, 2013); (Khirwadkar & Chaudhari, 2014); (Wit, Hunter, Egron-Polak, & Howard, 2015)

SWOT Analysis (Canada Internationalization)

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Canadian universities offer prestigious and high-quality programs to incoming students. Having both English and French as national languages can facilitate exchange of students. Affordable education Scholarships and discounts funded by endowments/good alumni relations High/healthy standard of living	Low internationalization rates of students going abroad still persist. US universities capture many of the potential incoming students going to North America. The Canadian job market does not value enough an international education experience.	Increase curricula quality by establishing collaborations between Canadian and foreign prestigious educational and research institutes. Substantially increase the number of students with an international experience.	Universities keep failing to accommodate students' needs in terms of Credit transfer policies, especially with non-US universities.

Results

Organizational Resource Platform

It is important to look to all the resources the organization has, Appendix 2. These resources can be classified according to 3 different categories: Competencies, Specialized Assets and Architecture of Relationship. To create a competitive advantage over other top Business Schools, the resources have to be valuable, rare, inimitable, non-substitutable and organizational embed. Regarding Nova SBE core competencies, one can identify Job Placement and International Exposure, as the ones with higher strength. Regarding specialized assets, which provide an advantage over competitors in a significant way, Reputation, Highly

Qualified Professors and Students with the best qualifications are the resources that seem to bring more benefits to the organization. Finally, the architecture of relationships consists of both internal and external networks that contribute to create and spread knowledge. In this case, the Network of Corporate Partners and the Alumni Network are the resources that contribute more to differentiate the school from its competitors.

SWOT Analysis (Nova SBE)

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
<p>Strong and diverse international partnerships and programs</p> <p>Reputation (Ranking and Accreditation): Top 30 of European Business Schools- Financial Times Ranking 2015</p> <p>High and Fast Employability of Students</p> <p>Teaching staff Quality</p> <p>Alumni Network</p> <p>Product Management: Variety of Programs offered</p>	<p>Information System Platform (not all students get a place in the courses of their preferences)</p> <p>Lack of space and facilities inside the current campus for the current number of students</p>	<p>New Campus, which will have new facilities, more space, and possibility to have and attract more students</p> <p>Increase Number of international Students</p> <p>Recruitment selectivity from prestigious companies</p>	<p>Cut in Government funding transfer</p> <p>International Competitiveness, mainly with countries where higher education is free</p> <p>Lack of an unanimous international strategy made by the Government for all universities</p>

Qualitative Research

All of the interviewees have been already on an exchange program before, so being in a different culture while studying was a really stimulating experience due to the different things that happen outside the classroom as well as inside the room, the stories lived with different colleagues, different languages and different ideals. For those who were Portuguese descent, the main reasons that brought them to study in Portugal/Lisbon was the country itself, since there is a special connection between them and their roots. The geographical location, the weather conditions, the culture and tradition were also very important reasons that led them to decide to study in Portugal. Moreover, some of these students referred that if it wasn't for the scholarship offered, they wouldn't have come. There were other reasons that led those who didn't have any roots in the country, to study in Portugal such as the affordable cost of living, Lisbon being the capital as well as a place, although small, with many programs to offer and the fact that Nova SBE offered the CEMS program.

In what concerns their knowledge and awareness about Nova SBE, the partnership established with the Richard Ivey School of Business allowed some of these students to know Nova SBE. Then the website was used mostly for them to get more information about the school and its curriculum. The FPCBP (Federation of Portuguese Canadian Businesses and Professionals) and the University of Toronto Portuguese Association have been promoting this recognition, and also providing to Portuguese descent a Scholarship.

Moreover, since word of mouth (WOM) is a very important tool, in this case used to promote the school, it's important to consider the feedback and experience from the students regarding what they valued the most and the challenges that they faced while studying at Nova SBE: all of them valued the Discovery Week a great deal, since it was an activity that allowed to easily meet and interact with new people. Another relevant aspect was the diversity of students, that is, people from a wide range of places with different cultures and ways of thinking that were enrolled in the program, meaning the possibility that Nova SBE offered them in order to work with people very different from them. Nevertheless, the main challenges these Canadian students felt were mostly the workload of the courses that was very intense (although they realize the benefits of it in the future); the lack of organization in certain aspects at a support level (application for courses, misinformation, poor structure of some of them), as well the old infrastructures and the lack of space for students to study and the teaching methods in some course need to be reviewed since they doesn't provide anything practical. Therefore some of the interviewees mentioned that they wouldn't recommend Nova SBE that much for people who already have work experience, since what they are looking for is a more practical approach and less academic. Furthermore, the interviewees also complained the lack of help from Nova SBE in what concerns finding a suitable accommodation, dealing with legal and administrative issues.

As part of the interviews, it was also asked the students how they would compare Nova SBE to Canadian Universities. All of them noted the fact of the number of students per class was much lower than in Canada, making much easier to build relationships with individuals from all around the world. In Canada classrooms can reach up to 500 students. Also Nova SBE has much stronger international focus and connections – yet smaller overall corporate connections compared to Canadian top universities. The quality of education in Nova SBE is much higher, the workload is bigger and prepares you better to go to the business world, compared to Canadian universities.

Many of the interviewees justified the lack of Canadian students studying abroad mainly because schools abroad are not well recognized in Canada, meaning finding a job later looks better if you went to a good school in Canada. The Education system is considered very good, and publicly well recognized. Many Canadians do not have the urge to live abroad because the quality of life in Canada is very good. These are some reasons pointed out that justify the lack of interest by undergraduate students to study abroad. Also, the parents have some influence regarding this topic. Those who didn't experienced an exchange program, are more reluctant to let their children go on an exchange.

Canadians tend to enter, after finishing their bachelor's degree, in the professional world, and don't engage in a master's degree right away, mainly because they can't afford and because they are more into the MBA than MSc. MSc is not very recognized in the Canadian business program yet, therefore MBA is the one students would do instead- many job positions require the MBA.

Despite all this, more and more students are turning their attention to the world abroad, with the CEMS program opening doors into this world - it is at least allowing Canadian schools to be affiliated with international schools which makes them able to sell better on their CV.

Finally, the interviewees made some recommendations in order to attract more fellow Canadians and improve their welcoming. The first was to invest on marketing Nova SBE in Canada. It could use the recognition of the CEMS program and use it to advertise other programs of the school as Canadian students have no idea of the reputation that Nova SBE has among European universities. They are mostly aware of the most well-known ones such as, HEC or Oxford or the most prestigious American Universities. This might be a problem, if these students go back to the US to start their professional life, because the reputation of Nova SBE may not be recognized due to the lack of awareness in North America. Also, gather all international students from outside European Union in order to provide them all the necessary information regarding legal issues that they need to take care to facilitate their stay here, was another suggestion from the interviewees.

Experience	Motivations
<p>“This is not my first time doing an exchange. After I finished my last exchange, I promised myself that it would not be the last. Studying abroad made me realize that there’s more life outside Toronto. I made friends for life, and the experience of dealing with new cultures and different points of view was amazing.” (Male, 24)”</p> <p>“I only knew the existence of Nova SBE through the FPCBC.” (Male, 23)</p> <p>“The Discovery Week was really important to meet new people and to facilitate my integration in the school” (Female, 25)</p> <p>“By being here I learned new things, and some I relearned but with a different perspective. Meeting new colleges was the main highlight, as there were many international students.” (Female, 27)</p> <p>“Sometimes it was really hard to find a place to work with a group. If you didn’t arrive earlier, it was impossible”. (Female, 24)</p> <p>“It was really difficult for me when arrived in Portugal, because I had to figure out by myself how to deal with legal issues. No one from the school helped me.” (Male, 24)</p> <p>“One of the many good things here in Portugal, when comparing to Canada, is that the classrooms are much smaller, making a much more ‘familiar environment’ and making much easier to build relationships.” (Male, 26)</p> <p>“Many of my friends don’t feel the necessity to study abroad, because Canada offers a very high life quality, with many benefits, such as good education, health insurance, and ease in finding job.” (Male, 26)</p> <p>“When I did my exchange program in my bachelor’s degree it was really hard to convince my parents because neither my father nor mother had done anything like this</p>	<p>“The culture was the main reason, as well as my family and friends. Weather and cost of living were bonuses.” (Female, 27)</p> <p>“Portuguese background had a large influence on my decision to come here, as well as the career program offered by the school” (Male, 23)</p> <p>“The scholarship was the main driver in my decision to go and take the opportunity to live in Portugal for a year. It was really nice to go back to my roots and be able to visit my family more often. I didn’t know much about Nova before this but when I researched I did like the program.” (Male, 26).”</p> <p>“It is the capital so I knew there would be lots to do. There are so man beaches close by, nightlife, and culture all in one location.” (Female, 27)</p> <p>“A determinant factor that made go to Nova SBE was the fact that it offered the CEMS program” (Male, 24)</p> <p>“The cost of living and the weather conditions and the fact that Nova SBE was considered the best place to study Management in Portugal where determinant factors to choose Portugal as a destination to study abroad” (Female, 23)</p>

before. I had a meeting together with my parents via Skype with the school I was going to. In that meeting I've also talked with the professors of my universities responsible for exchanging programs in order to convince to let me go." (Male 23)

Recommendations

Taking into consideration the interview results, Nova SBE's available resources and the research made, recommendations can be drawn to help Nova SBE attract new Canadian students and raise awareness. They are divided in 3 levels: Strategic, Promotional and Institutional. This way, the faculty can design different focus groups to target them in an efficient way. It is important to bear in mind first and foremost that all recommendations and their implementation must be aligned with the core values and mission of the school. Without integrity and coherence between the top management of the school, the staff and the entire faculty it is much harder to implement a successful strategy.

Strategic:

The co-operative approach is the one that best fits the goal of attracting more students because it tackles two fundamental problems: the idea of studying abroad and the fact that Bologna and taking a Master before any professional experience are not aligned with today's general preferences of the academic education of Canadian Students. It's important to establish a solid relationship with the most noticeable Business and Economics Schools of the biggest cities in Canada and from there gain recognition and spread out to other universities.

Since Canadian students do not see enrolling in a Master's degree abroad as a top priority, Nova SBE should also consider targeting bachelor's students, especially now that they can choose to take the whole program in English. The target population in this case is larger, as there are more students taking an undergraduate degree. A positive effect of this is that even if the students decide not to enroll in an undergraduate degree right away, they are shown a top-European faculty ahead of the others, increasing the chances of them to enroll later in any of the Masters Degrees.

Promotional:

- Feedback from Canadian students, on Nova's website regarding the possibilities that Nova SBE offers;
- Testimony of alumni in big and well-known companies around the world, in order to show the success of Nova SBE and its impact in the world;
- Invest on overseas trips to Canadian high schools/universities and participation on Canadian fairs in order to increase awareness.
- Leveraging the recognition of the CEMS program to get popularity, and this way advertise other programs of the school as Canadian students have no idea how well ranked Nova SBE is in relation to its peers;
- The message conveyed to undergraduate students would be divided in two phases: flyers and posters in high-schools in a first stage (as they are proven more effective, (Bond, et al., 2009)) and via email marketing and social network afterwards. In the latter, the content should be very clear and give straight away at the most extent possible all the necessary steps for the students to enroll. They would include very concise information in terms of academic programs, and "web directions" where the students could go and see more information about the school, the country, and what they need to do to enroll. The message should also include a section to parents, who are obviously very important stakeholders in the decision made by the student. Besides this, there should be visual content embedded, preferably in the form of a link to a YouTube video-teaser including with a testimony of a Canadian student presenting the benefits of studying abroad and studying at Nova SBE. With this, the candidates would have someone to relate with. One or more members of the International Office and/or the NOVA International club could be nominated in order to promptly answer to every doubt parents or students could have, and offer suggestions and directions in a personal fashion.

Institutional:

- Provide discounts on the tuition fee for undergraduate students if they come in group. With this, the Canadian students are more willing to engage in an exchange program since they are not coming alone, parents will be more willing to let them go since the tuition fees would diminish and their children would not go alone as well;
- Given the potential increase of applicants, it is likely to be necessary an increase of the headcount in the International office in order to allow for NOVA to be able to give proper guidance concerning accommodation and provide the best solutions and all the information necessary to deal with legal issues (visas, banks, residency status); Build a special tab for non-EU students with all the information (legal issues, visas, residency status, bank account) required in order to prevent any unpleasant situation when they arrive; This would help in the tasks mentioned above, but having a personal involvement of someone from the faculty in the application process can make a difference in the output, both in an undergraduate and Master's degree level.
- Offer scholarships not only for Portuguese descent but for the students that have no roots in Portugal, both for Master and Bachelor's students.
- Invest on partnerships with Portuguese Associations in Canada and expand the number of agreements and academic programs with different universities in order to raise awareness.

Implementation

In order to implement the recommendations mentioned before, one must take into consideration the time and costs needed to put them into action.

Regarding the promotional recommendations, these have the purpose of raising awareness and create a strong brand image among Canadian students' minds. Therefore, the first one is about **creating an interactive world map** where one can click on the home country, and an alumnus from Canada would pop-up in a video showing Nova SBE, and shortly speak about his/her

experience there⁴. This is something that can be made easily, without big costs besides the ones dedicated to website maintenance and development. The same thing goes for the **testimony of alumni**, where an interactive interview would be available in the website. All website changes and updates should be in place in September 2016.

Contrary to this, **the overseas trips**, either in universities or in international fairs, would require a quite some investment, but it is one of the best ways to raise awareness and advertise directly amongst the head and staff of the target-faculty, and help sharing all the information necessary to the students about Nova SBE.

These trips could be also used to enter in contact with career offices of both public and private high schools, to present Nova SBE and discuss how it would be disclosed to their students. For Master Degrees the best time of the year to do them would be on December 2016, in the end of the semester, where students could be aroused by the opportunities the university has to offer and still have time to consider and decide it as place to study. Any time between September and December could be used to engage with high schools and release the ads about Nova SBE and its undergraduate programs.

For the undergraduate students, the **email marketing** should be directed to them and also their parents, since they have an influence in what concerns studying abroad. Would students provide their contacts to get more information, the school should be ready to disclose the email right away. The first implementation of the "undergraduate" approach should target students enrolling in the fall of 2017, that is, all trips done in 2016 should already have this goal in mind. It could be important to consider using the Federation of Portuguese-Canadian Business and Professionals, and even the Portugal-Canada chamber of Commerce and Industry to obtain the necessary networking to make this more effective.

⁴ This could actually be used in more countries.

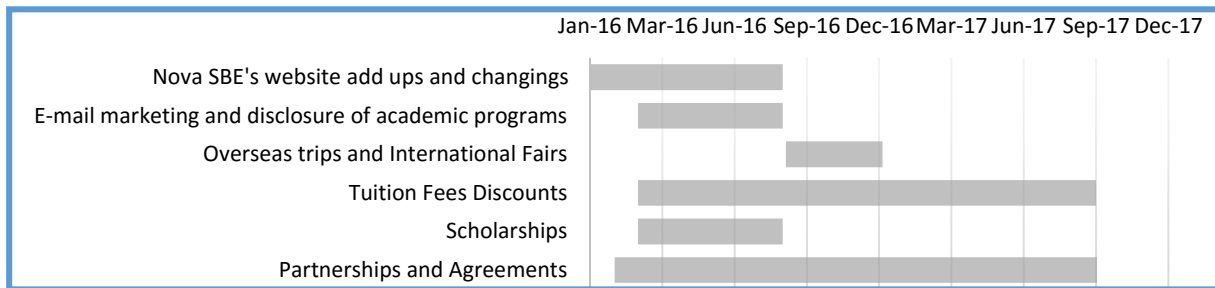
Regarding the institutional recommendations, the **discount of the tuition fees** for undergraduates would be launched in September 2017/2018, when the classes start. The discount applicable would depend on the number of students in the group: the higher the number, the higher the discount.

The International Office should **nominate a person responsible for dealing with all the legal issues** (visas, allocation, banks, residency status), in order to help the arrival and stay of international students. In this sense, it would facilitate if new incoming students share a house, even to make the adaptation easier.

Regarding the **scholarships**, this should be done in universities that Nova SBE has partnerships with, and offered (partially-only the academic expenses) as an award for the best student, with the highest GPA but also that has developed several soft skills (teamwork and collaboration, adaptability, problem solving and critical observation), and an international “profile”, preferably including any experience, in order to ensure that the candidate chosen will be comfortable with the situation of studying abroad. All of these requirements should be evaluated by an expert in human resources ensured by Nova SBE, through an interview. In this way, every student has the possibility to earn a scholarship, not only the ones that are Portuguese descent.

For the **partnerships with Portuguese associations in Canada**, it should be done like it's been done over the years with other universities' partnership in order to save resources, money and time.

Below is a Gantt chart, to clearly understand when the implementations of the several recommendations mentioned will take place. The bars indicate the time of development of each task. When it reaches to the ends, the activity is live.



Conclusion

After the development of this dissertation, one can state that this research project successfully achieved its objective in order to understand how the Canadian higher education market works, studying the students' behaviors and what are the main obstacles preventing them to study abroad. However, it is important to stress out some aspects that result from the research made: the number one reason that prevents Canadian students to study abroad is the lack of funds and financial support. Also the quality of life in Canada is very high (high quality of education, easy to get a job, high salaries, health insurance, among others), which ultimately makes the students have inertia to leave the country. The idea of getting a professional experience after the bachelors is much deepened in students' minds as well. However it's important to bear in mind that Canadian students consider Portugal as one of the nicest places in Europe, specially due to the geographical location (not very far from Canada), the weather conditions, as well as the warm and welcoming Portuguese people, the culture that the country offers and the low cost of living. Regarding Nova SBE itself, the major challenge that the students felt was the lack of information and help regarding legal issues and accommodation which affects all adaptation and integration process overall. All of these insights were essential to develop recommendations for Nova SBE to be able to attract more Canadian students.

Despite all of the barriers that prevent Canadian students to study abroad, they are becoming increasingly open minded to the world abroad. The positive benefits of studying in a foreign

country is conquering these students' mindset, and therefore Nova SBE needs to take advantage of this change and act now.

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